

The Proxy War

by enoemos

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Summary: A normal employee of Aperture Science gets an assignment which leads him to strange places... Soon he realizes his role in the cosmic chess game might be far greater than he thought. Lots of OCs, some mature language, violence, slightly AU but not conflicting with the happenings of Half-Life or Portal

1. Prologue - The Awakening

I own neither Half-Life nor Portal, Valve does

Slowly he opened his eyes, closing them again as soon as he noticed the blinding light. His head felt as if someone tried to crush his skull, his body heavy and hard to move. He rose and stood with closed eyes, unsteady on his feet; after a while, letting his mind become clearer, he finally opened them, slowly, to let them adjust to the bright light.

His surroundings were those of a clinic white square room, illuminated by a row of neon lamps behind bulletproof glass that were powered by batteries; at the wall he was facing there was a simple metal door. He turned around and scanned the room, noticing a white, rounded gun-like object lying on the floor. After staring at the object for a while, the memory of the recent happenings hit him and he let out a shocked sound. Slowly he sat down, continuing to stare at the object before him.

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Not even an hour ago, he was sitting at his desk, working at the drawing of a final "Aperture Science Handheld Portal Device", short "Portal Gun", and uploading it to the company's intranet. He was alone at the office, most of his co-workers being assembled at the "Bring-your-daughter-to-work day". Being unmarried and without children, he had no intention of going there and meeting many, many stupid little children "€" he hated children, mostly because of all

the noise they did.

He did not like most of his colleagues either, nor did they like him. Actually, he was not really a social person, not unfriendly, but with a rather cold attitude, just occasionally warming up. Thus, he had just few friends, but those were close friends. Most of them have assembled at the "Bring-your-daughter-to-work day"; the others were on vacation.

He also knew his superiors despised him, but he was a brilliant thinker and had a PhD in theoretical Physics. They could not fire him or move him to some insignificant department, because they needed him, what made him feel some malicious joy.

But sometimes he heard a low voice in his head "which was probably called conscience. He knew that this "testing" was not safe, rather extremely dangerous, and sometimes he asked himself if it was right to abandon ethics "for science. Once he has been down there, at the test chambers. At the time, he inspected a new apparatus he took part in developing. He saw how they scraped one of the hobos - or rather his remains - off the floor, but as he mentioned Aperture going too far, one of his superiors told him it was "for science" and he should just accept it. For the greater good. For the company. And, most important, for your salary. Thank god he didn't work at Aperture yet when they were using employees as test subjects.

However, he did not resign "Aperture Science paid well and the working conditions were good "if you were a scientist.

After finishing his work, he leaned back, closed his eyes for a moment and let out a fatigued sigh. Finally, he stood up and made his way to the next coffee machine, needing some caffeine to wake him up. As he waited for the machine to finish pouring delicious brown liquid into his cup, he became slowly aware of something being out of place, but he could not grasp what it was. Drinking his coffee, he examined his surroundings, without seeing anything being wrong. Then, he noticed a slight shade of green in the air, at first, he was confused, but then he remembered the neurotoxin. The neurotoxin they gave GLaDOS, a new artificial intelligence they developed by the wish of the founder of Aperture Science. He didn't like the idea of a supercomputer with an actual consciousness from the beginning.

"Stupid sons of bitches" he whispered and let his cup of coffee fall, which shattered and spilled brown liquid all over the floor. Turning on his heels, he ran out the office, sprinting long corridors to reach a faraway exit while his breath quickened because of both exhaustion and fear. He knew the facility like the back of his hand, but he was afraid. Therefore, he made errors and ended up at a dead end, in one of those recently built testing rooms for explosives "Aperture wanted to widen its product palette. He turned and tried to open the door, that slammed shut behind him, but his hands shook far too much to use the mechanism to unlock the door.

As the green fog became thicker, his mind became cloudier and his body heavier and slower. He pounded his fists weakly against the door but nothing happened; no one came and the door did not open. Eventually he collapsed, trying to stay conscious, crying for help; but no one heard him. The moment he was at the brink of passing out, something happened. Suddenly time stood still, literally; he could

not move and he did not die, but his mind would not become clearer.

"Well, that was close, wasn't it?" said a strange, raspy voice beside his ear, pronouncing the words in an awkward and alien way.

A man walked in front of him, tall and thin, perhaps in his forties, with pale skin and a short haircut, wearing an ordinary gray-blue two-piece business suit, a purple tie and holding a briefcase in his right hand.

"I have to say the circumstances are quite inconvenient, but my employers demanded immediate actions. Therefore, I have recommended your services to my... employers, and they have authorized me to offer you a job. I fear your new appointment will take you to a place, that'sâ€¦ far away.

However, I cannot make you accept this proposalâ€¦ Time to chooseâ€¦"

For some time he just stared at the stranger. Then, realizing he had actually _no _choice, too fatigued to be angry, he attempted to nodâ€¦ in vain, his head would simply not move. Nevertheless, the stranger reacted.

"Wisely done, Mr. Aeacus."

As he turned away from Aeacus, everything became pitch black. His new "employer" walked away and then suddenly opened an previously unseen door. Bright light illuminated the man who straightened his tie, threw a look at the fallen scientist, then walked through the door, which closed behind him, leaving Aeacus alone in the dark.

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Aeacus stood up and picked up the portal gun before him. He was surprised they finished it; the neurotoxin should have killed everyone in the facilityâ€¦ Well, perhaps some managed to survive. They must have finished the work. Stupid fools.

But by now probably all were dead, he realized. This goddamn machine had killed every single one of his colleagues, his few friends, rivals, superiors and many people he did not even know. And all those kidsâ€¦ this was horrific, he hated children, but they were innocent; they have had yet a long life before them, destroyed by a rogue AI.

Hell, why did they give her neurotoxin? Were they out of their fucking minds? Rage grew inside him, rage beyond everything he ever felt before, making him want to punch something, but he restrained himself from doing something stupid like this. In this moment he remembered the testing, but quieted his conscience again; what happened could not be undone.

He turned around and walked to the door, put a hand on the doorknob, but hesitated for a moment. Doubts beclouded his mind; what would he find behind this door? The strange man mentioned Aeacus new "job" would take him to a faraway place. Moreover, who was this man? How could he stop time? What was this job? And why did he choose

Aeacus?

For a moment, puzzlement was all over his face. Then, realizing he could not solve the problem by thinking, he put it in a distant corner of his mind, focusing on the matters at hand.

"What have you gotten yourself into, Victor?" he whispered, deactivated the safety mechanism and turned the doorknob.

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Chell stared at the bizarre sight before her, slightly confused. She doubted GLaDOS had done thisâ€¦ she was crazy, but she wouldn't have destroyed a part of herself and she probably did not have the means to do _this_.

Just before her a part of the wall has been cut out, a cube of about 5x5x5 meters has went missing; pipes, cables and metal parts were exposed.

"Ah, this. I don't know what happened here, but some time ago someone ran into this room, and after a while itâ€¦ just disappeared. As if it's been transported into another universe. Perhaps he was testing and followed the advice of a future self, which was trying to warn him. Or some interdimensional agent took him somewhere to do his dirty work. Sure. However, I'm still going to kill you."

Chell, now even more confused, just shook her head and proceeded to make her way to GLaDOS.

Author's Note:

_Well, this is my first attempt at fanfiction. Actually, it's the first literature work I ever did, aside from school-related stuff. So tell me please, is my writing style any good / are there many grammar mistakes / what could I improve? I appreciate all the critique I get.

—

English is not my native language, thus I fear my writing seems strangeâ€¦

And yes, my main character is called Victor Aeacus. If you want to, look up who 'Aeacus' was.

2. Chapter 1 - Another World

I own neither Half-Life nor Portal, Valve does

After hearing a quiet hiss while opening the door he stepped through it into the open; the strangeness of his surroundings struck him at once.

The air seemed to be cleaner than anything he ever breathed before; '_the atmosphere here must contain more oxygen than usual', _he thought and realized something.

'_I am not on earth anymore! '_

His eyes widened and he looked frantically around; everything was so

alien to him.

He stood on a hill, looking down into a big valley inhabiting the strangest plants he has ever seen, violet, distorted tree-like objects sticking out of the ground, with a smooth surface, and a lot of small branches at the top, but without leafs. Most of them were about seven meters high and nearly a meter thick. Between them, there was a lot of free space, filled with different small plants that came out of the ground, one being stranger than the other. The ground itself was covered with grayish moss; he could not detect any wild life. Far in the distance he could see a huge mountainside, the top covered in snow and hidden behind thick, reddish clouds.

As he looked up he noticed most of the sky was occupied by a huge gas planet " he was on a moon, Victor concluded. Remembering he just came out of a testing room built by Aperture Science he turned around, to be rewarded with the view of a cube, which gray surface was made out of cut off pipes, cables and pieces of metal. The door seemed really tiny in relation to the huge cube.

Eventually, Victor decided to walk down the hill into the valley but he remembered holding a portal gun in his hands. Deciding to test its functionality, he quickly shot two portals at a smooth area of the cube and at a flat, not vegetated space between the trees. Grinning as a red and a white portal opened, he stepped through the white one and came out in between the trees.

'_Fascinating'_

He stared at the gun, a masterpiece of technology, probably one of the greatest accomplishments of science.

'_As it seems, all the hard work did not go to waste. I did not die from any side effectsâ€|'_

He wanted to walk further into the "forest", but suddenly he felt weak and breathing became harder. Seconds later he collapsed, tried to stand up again, in vain.

'_The fucking atmosphere is toxic'_ was his last thought before he passed out.

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The first thing he saw as he opened his eyes was a young brunette woman, looking at him with curiosity. What she saw was a handsome young man in his thirties, tall, thin, with shoulder-long black hair and glasses.

"So you've decided to get up at last."

Slowly, he sat on the medical bed he's been lying in and examined his surroundings. The room was quite big and had white walls which were mostly covered with medical equipment. At his left there were five more medical beds, all empty, on the opposite wall a glazed double door, in the right corner there was a desk with a computer on it.

The woman in front of him had long, brown hair, was quite tall and had very pale skin.

She decided to wave her hand in front of his face after he did not react.

"Hello? You understand me, do you?"

Perplexed he nodded at her.

"Well, I'm Dr. Weikner. You are quite lucky we found you before you died because of the toxic atmosphere. Why didn't you have a gas mask with you? Thankfully you didn't try to touch the trees â€" it would've killed you. It took me a lot of time and too many drugs to get this shit out of your system.

You aren't from here, huh?"

She raised an eyebrow, then walked to a shelf, taking out some medical equipment and went back to him.

"I have to perform a medical checkup. Hey, are you a mute or something?"

"Noâ€|" he spoke up and hesitated for a moment. "Where am I? How did I get here?"

"So you really came from earth. Probably together with that room on the hill and this strange â€| device. You're the first one since _we_ came here. I don't have a clue why you're here or how you got hereâ€| but we're from earth, too, you know."

"So, you were teleported here, too?"

"Yeah. You'll hear the whole story soon anyways. By the way, do you have a name?"

"Victor Aeacus, nice to meet you."

He stood up and shook her hand, but realized suddenly he was in underwear.

"My clothes?" he asked her, blushing slightly.

She chuckled and simply pointed at some neatly folded fabric, then made her way to the desk, sitting down and beginning to work on her computer.

"Some people will come and want to talk to you. So better dress up. Of course, if you want to, you can stay in your undergarments, but I wouldn't recommend you to do so."

Rolling his eyes, Victor dressed himself, now wearing simple jeans, a black shirt underneath a gray sweatshirt and some shoes of the same color.

'_There are other people here. Butâ€| why? Did they get here the same way I did? And how long are they already here if they managed to build a hospitalâ€| or whatever this building is. And where's my portal gun?'

Before he could ask Weikner any question, the door opened and two men

walked in, both in security uniforms and pistols hanging on their belts. One of them, a heavily built man with short, red hair and a beard walked towards Victor, the other one, a tall man with gray hair, greeted Weikner, who just looked up and then proceeded to type on her keyboard.

"Well, you've finally woken up, as I see; I'm Hussain, George Hussain, chief of the security."

His voice was deep and he spoke loud, his handshake so strong he nearly crushed Victor's hand; Victor didn't like the man from the beginning.

"Victor Aecus." he answered.

Hussain eyed Victor with suspicion. They clearly did not trust each other.

"Well, let's move to my office. We have to discuss quite a lot."

He turned around, gestured the other guard to follow him and walked out the door. Victor went after him, quickly, glancing briefly at Weikner, who gave him a sympathetic look.

Hussain lead him through long corridors with a lot of doors. Some people were walking around, most in lab coats, with clipboards or papers in their hands; he seemed to be in some scientific facility, probably underground because there were no windows to be seen. Concrete walls were illuminated by cold light which originated from flickering neon lamps. The ceiling was nearly four meters high, he noticed while looking up, nearly bumping into a scientist who shouted some obscenities at Victor.

"And here we are."

They entered a small room with a desk, which was covered with papers, and two chairs behind and in front of it. An old carpet lying on the floor and some cheap paintings tried to mask the ugliness of the gray walls. Hussain sat behind the desk, gesturing Victor to sit down, too, while the other guard stood in front of the closed door.

"Well, Mr. Aeacus, I am quite interested how you happened to show up in a nearby forest together with a room and a device which is able to create _portals_. Care to enlighten me?"

Victor waited for a moment, deciding what to tell the security officer.

"I was at work when suddenly the facility was flooded with neurotoxin, so I tried to reach an exit, but I ended up at a dead end. I passed out and then I was suddenly on this planet, together with this device built by the company I'm working for.

Now do _you _care to enlighten me why you're here and where my portal gun is?"

Victor had a feeling it was no good idea to tell Hussain who sent him here. Hussain tilted his head and leaned back, looking at Victor with mistrust.

"You know this sounds really unlikely. I don't believe you. But, Hell, it doesn't make a difference if I tell you how we got here. You seeâ€|"

"Chief!" the guard interrupted him. "He's obviously working for Aperture Science. He could be a spy, or trying to sabotage our workâ€|"

"Gardner! We're not on earth anymore. And whether I like this guy or not â€" he surely didn't fucking come here by purpose, because mankind does surely neither possess the technology to teleport to another universe nor do we do any research that's relevant to Aperture!"

While talking Hussain has stood up, now he sat down again, continuing to glare at Gardner, who shut his mouth and looked into a corner. His gaze shifted back to Victor who raised an eyebrow at him, unimpressed, and he continued to talk.

"I think you noticed by now we're Black Mesa, being a scientist at Aperture.

However, we worked at a facility in Canada, doing some classified research.

It happened about half a year ago. Suddenly everyone had a headache, some passed out, many sensitive instruments were destroyed and any contact to the rest of the world broke off. We didn't know what happened at first, but luckily the security cameras continued to function properly. What we saw wasâ€| surreal. But all of us realized we were not on earth anymore.

We send out some scouts, but it took two weeks till we finally found this facility, which has been abandoned a long time ago, as it seems. We lost some people because our radio didn't work and we did not know the air was toxic. Well, the facility has been probably built by aliens; thankfully they breathed nearly the same air as we do, so we could settle in here without greater problems. The ruins of the Black Mesa facility lie about a kilometer north of here.

Butâ€| not a long time ago, one of the scientists proved theâ€| ahemâ€| gravitational constant is slightly different here. Thus he deduced we're in another universe. Well, and now we're frantically trying to find a way to return to earth.

Interestingly we've found out this planet seems to be inhabited by some intelligent race with two parties who are at war, but we don't know much more about them."

Victor stared at Hussain for some time, processing the information. He was absolutely confused by the recent happenings and still deeply shocked he was not on earth anymore. A question came to his mind.

"Where did you take the portal gun?"

"The scientists believe the technology could help them with their research."

Victor nodded slowly, not lucky with the fact the portal gun was not

in his hands, but accepting the fact because he had no chance to get it back without the consent of the Black Mesa personnel.

"Well, Mr. Aeacus, I think you must be quite tired and in needing some time to process the recent events. Mr. Gardener will lead you to your new apartment. Tomorrow one of the scientists will take care of you, give you a new occupationâ€¦ We're in need of every helping hand. Only if you accept it, of course."

"And if I don't?"

"We'll kick you out, without a gas mask, those are quite valuable."

Victor chuckled darkly. "I could've guessed so. I accept."

"Very well."

Hussain shook his hand and then Gardner led him out of the office. He didn't speak a word to Victor, but occasionally greeted some nearby people who observed the new arrival suspiciously.

They stopped before a metal door with the number 425 drawn over it with some black paint.

"Your room."

This was the first time Gardner spoke to him.

"Thanks, mate, I owe you. You're the probably the friendliest person I've ever met."

Gardner just glared at him, then turned around and walked away.

Victor entered his room, which was quite tiny. There was nothing besides a bed, a shelf with some scientific books and a night lamp.

'_Great. A lot of friendly people, a huge luxury apartment and a deadly planet â€" what else could you wish for? '_

Victor let himself fall on the bed and stared at the dirty ceiling, thinking about the strange man who employed him.

'_What's my job anyways? He didn't tell me what to do. '_

He understood that at the moment he was nothing but a puppet and his "Employer" was the puppet master.

Of course, Victor had no intention of dancing to somebody's pipe.

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_(Without a sound, using telepathy) _

"Without knowing it, Gordon Freeman has provided us with invaluable resources. Both the portal device, as the humans call it, and the navigators stone will give us the possibility to execute the plan,

which will provide _us _with the means to change the outcome of thisâ€¦| mess. However, to be successful your plan has to beâ€¦| perfect. _Flawless_. Can I rely on your services?"

"Of course... the plan will not fail."

Author's Note:

Well, this was a fast update. Hope you like it. Interestingly I found out today that if you drop your earphones into water, the bass frequencies get stronger. WTF?

3. Chapter 2 - Unforseen Events

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Authors Note:

I changed the end of the last chapter to make the story more coherent.

The creature floated above the imperial palace, having a breathtaking view of the city underneath. Its tentacles were tense and shaking because of the horrific sight of the metropolis which spanned over tens of kilometers; the outskirts could be seen far in the horizon. Smoke came out of some buildings, fire could be seen and the cries, the cries which could be heard all over the city, pierced the hearts of the creature. An invisible darkness, a prediction of disaster, hovered over the mass of buildings; depressing the creature and making it shout its ritual cries of mourning. Just before its eyes its kin was being extinguished, and the creature was to blame.

It didn't want _this_.

The caste of the scientists has spoken of an uprising, of freedom, of defeating the invaders. But everything failed, they were found out.

In one time unit the disaster would start. In five time units the Aether, the mother-ocean they lived in would begin to boil, although it was night. Till then the day-side of the planet would be devoid of all life. In eight time units they would all die and in ten time units the planet would be melted away by a wave of incredibly hot hydrogen and helium.

Why didn't the senate let the creature go? It could have stopped this madness â€" this madness it had caused. Its research has been misused; this should've been a new source of energy, giving them the opportunity to break free of the rule of the invaders, giving them the possibility to create weapons which would destroy their citadels and outposts. But twisted minds changed the goal of this research. They didn't listen to the creature anymore after it had done its part and created the most powerful weapon _ever_, to use it against the home world of the invaders.

Traitors are common things. But how big must a reward be, to make someone willing to cause the extermination of his own race?

The invaders decided this planet was of no worth anymore - they took

the technology created by their captives and disappeared, but not before testing the new weapon. And this was a mistake in some way.

They would not use it on any other race; this was the only thing it was thankful for. It had not been designed to use it more than once.

The creature felt the ocean become hot around him; its eyes started to hurt, its tentacles became hard and immovable. After a while it could not see anymore and its skin began to melt, but it didn't make a sound. It would die with pride, not giving the invaders the satisfaction of it passing away like a weakling.

The creature waited for death, sweet death, which would wash away all the sorrow, all the regret and anger.

But life was cruel.

Suddenly time stopped and a strange voice spoke the ritual greeting words, used to address someone inferior.

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The sound of a firing Heckler & Koch MP5 reverberated from the walls. Victor had hit four of the five targets, one in the head, one in the heart, the others somewhere in the torso.

"That's way better than before. As it seems you can handle a submachine gun pretty well, as well as the nine millimeter pistol; but you really suck at any other weapon."

"Thanks for noticing the obvious. I never held a weapon in my hands before â€" wait, I never even intended to."

"You can't be picky out here. If those aliens decide to attack us you'll need to know how to use a gun; it's mandatory to always have one with you. Anything could happen, anytime."

And now, one more try."

The security officer, small, with a bald head, and a humorous expression, somehow likeable, pressed a button which replaced the bullet-ridden targets with new ones.

"After my training this rookie will be the most dangerous scientist ever, Sergej."

"Oh, sure, Johnson."

"Come on, this one will be a fucking war machine. Imagine, an ingenious scientist with his huge weaponry going on a rampage against the evil ones. The only thing he needs furthermore is a beautiful woman accompanying him, and he's the hero of the day."

"Johnson, I don't know whether he could do that, I mean he barely learned to shootâ€"|"

"That wasn't meant seriously, you know."

"Oh."

Dr. Sergej Reus, a young Russian man, tall, skinny and with short gray hair, looking quite confused, took his glasses off and began to clean them with some fabric he retrieved out of his lab coat. He knew other people thought of him being naïve, because he didn't understand much humor and always made a gaffe.

But although having nearly no social skills, he was likeable, and a very intelligent and knowledgeable man; if asked about his subject he could recite hours of material and draw conclusions which left others completely astonished. His marks in school and university have been some of the nation-wide best. But his isolation and ingeniousness made some people believe he was some kind of mad scientist or mentally ill. Thus some laughed at him, some respected him, others avoided him and some few became his friends.

Having shot his targets again, this time having hit all of them, Victor removed his ear protectors and turned around to face the two men behind the bullet-proof glass.

"Hey guys, are we done here? I'm starving. I ate nothing for like two days."

"Alright, this should be enough training for now. Place your gun and the ammunition on the table with the other weapons, keep the pistol with you."

Victor did as he was told and left the shooting range through a heavy yellow security door, removing his bullet-proof vest and placing it on a rusty metal shelf. The three men left the room and made their way to the cafeteria, going through the same, cold corridors as always.

"Alright, what's on the menu? Scotch fillet with fried potatoes and a bottle of the finest red wine?"

"Sadly no, I think we'll have to eat the same shit as always"

Reus grimaced.

"Oh god, this synthetic food is disgusting. I wish it was the end of the month then they give us usually some eatable food."

"So you produce synthetic food down here?" Victor looked a little bit surprised.

"Yeah One of the scientists had the fucking idea to grow some bacteria on the moss that can be found everywhere outside the facility. The stuff we eat is basically their shit. But it's rich in proteins, vitamins, and all the other essential stuff we need."

"And I thought my stay here couldn't get any better. You guys are the only good thing that happened to me since I came here. Well, perhaps this doctor"

Johnson chuckled silently.

"Don't try it even. She's an ice queen; you'll only get a bloody

nose."

"Wasn't up to anything anyways. Sergej, you didn't tell me yet what my new assignment will beâ€¦ I hope it's something better than some laboratory assistant."

"Uh, of course. Ahem, since you have a PhD in theoretical physics they want you to work with the scientists who try to make a theory concerning the multiverse, which would help us to get back to earth. So you're going to work with me, too, we're near a breakthrough; I'm sure the others will appreciate your help."

"Sure. " Victor grimaced. "All the time since I came here, nearly everyone's giving me the cold shoulder and looking at me like I was a criminal.

Well, I guess they are just scared of me, but who wouldn't be? The evil Aperture scientist who came here to blow them all up and steal their research.

Sometimes I really lose all hope in humanity. I mean: We're on some strange planet in another universe and all they can think of is suspecting me being a spy? Fuck, if I'd know how to travel between universes I wouldn't be here anymore!"

Johnson shook his head and let out a sigh.

"People do not change Victor; it doesn't matter where you are or what situation you're in. Mistrust and greed are always there."

"I know just too well what you're talking about."

Both Reus and Johnson shot him a curious look, but they felt it wouldn't be a good idea to dig further in.

A short time later they passed a big gate at the end of the corridor and walked inside a huge hall. In the right half of the room, there were some long tables with benches, some few were occupied but most free; in the corner was a service area. The left half of the room was mostly free space, just a sole podium with a lectern being there.

Looking around, Victor noticed the nearly ten meters high concrete walls looked just as ugly as the rest of the facility. They were illuminated by the same neon lamps which were everywhere else inside the underground complex; Victor wondered how the people down here managed to not get depressive.

They made their way to the food counter, each one of them receiving one ration of strange, brown, stuff without any smell; it didn't look very appetizing. After placing themselves on an empty bench, they began to eat, Victor sitting opposite to the other two men.

He quickly shoveled the meal inside him because he was very hungry, but the two other men ate way more reluctant, being disgusted and bored with the strange food. After a while, Johnson spoke up.

"We use this hall as a cafeteria and for announcements. Before we settled in here, there were a lot of strange machines piled up inside this hall, most of them were defect, but a few worked. But still,

till now no one figured what they do or how they work. That's alien technology " it's no wonder we can't understand it."

Reus shook his head, strongly disagreeing.

"Eventually, we'll understand how those machines worked. And then we'll have even more technological knowledge, which will raise the chances of us getting back to earth. The technology isn't that advanced, we're just dealing with things we never encountered before"

"Sure doc. This may be a noble goal, but I haven't seen any progress in understanding the principle of operation of those machines since we got here."

They were silent for a while, then Victor looked up from his dish, having finished his meal, and a thought sprung to his mind.

"Sergej, did the scientists figure out how the portal gun works? After all they were so eager to extract the technology they took it from me without asking first."

"Uh, sorry for that. But I fear they don't understand it in the slightest, so they decided to let it rest for some time" I don't believe they'll give it back to you."

"That was pretty much obvious." Victor cursed under his breath.

"Then say, who's your leader? That friendly security chief?"

"Tsk, if he administrated us we'd be marching lock-step, doing everything he says or being shot because of disobedience and"

"What Johnson's trying to say is no, he isn't our only leader. We are being led by a small group of people; three of the highest-ranking scientists and, well, the security chief, Hussain."

"But did you have any success in finding out how to get away from here? Or how you even got here? I mean every single man and woman down here seems to be working on the problem since you were teleported to this universe, so you surely have some results, don't you?"

Reus and Johnson looked at each other silently and then proceeded to eat the rest of their meals.

"Wait, you didn't find out anything? You fucking confiscated the portal gun, made me work with you in this shitty underground facility, and then you tell me you didn't find out a sole thing about our situation for half a year?"

Johnson shot him an angry look, and spoke up.

"You're quite lucky we found you, I don't agree with everything those high and mighty shithheads decide on, but"

"He's right Johnson" Reus interrupted.

"We didn't make a single success since we got here, but Victor, please understand. This work is everything we have. It's our only possibility to get away from this place. I don't like it but we are not able to do anything else."

Victor nodded slowly, already regretting his harsh words, but his pride didn't let him apologize for his outburst.

"Come on, let's go. We'll show you your new working place, Iâ€|"

Suddenly a loud alarm went off in the whole facility, making them cover their ears and illuminating everything in a shade of deep crimson.

"Attention please, we're being attacked by unknown forces, please remain calm, we have everything under control. The turrets are already decimating the enemies, there's no danger of them breaking into the facility. I repeat, we'reâ€|"

A horrific scream and the sound of a body being thrown against a wall could be heard, then silence. An explosion shook through the underground complex and caused pieces of the ceiling to fall down, crashing some people underneath. Cries could be heard all over the facility and people ran around, in search of an exit.

All three men were frozen for some time, but Johnson recovered from the shock quickly and stood up.

"We need to get out of this facility, quickly. Before escaping we need some weapons, without them we'll neither escape from here nor survive out there, I fear."

Victor nodded then he remembered the portal gun and looked at Reus.

"Hey, where's the portal gun? We have to recover it, the enemy can't be allowed to get this technology." _'And something's telling me I'll need that portal deviceâ€|'_

Reus just continued to stare blankly in the air so Victor shook his shoulders to wake him up.

"Ahem, I think it's in block three, room five. I should be able to lead you there."

"Alright guys" Johnson decided "You go and get the portal gun."

The facility is made up of four blocks which are connected with short corridors; this hall is in the middle of the blocks. Between block three and four, there's an emergency exit, I think the attacking forces came through the main entrance in block one, so you shouldn't encounter many enemies if they aren't here yet. We'll meet at the emergency exit. And now _run_!"

Johnson took the door they entered the hall through; the other two men took the door to block three.

They encountered a lot of other people, some running in the opposite direction, others in the same as Victor and Reus. Distant explosions

could be heard, shaking the corridors, so some dust and debris fell down on them. Some bigger pieces of the wall fell down and crushed some unlucky people which were at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Hussain's voice could be heard over the intercom.

"All security forces move to the mess hall, we're encountering heavily armed forces."

The muffled sound of machine gun fire could be heard.

"I repeat, all security forces move to the mess hall, we need some support overâ€|"

The final cry of the security chief could be heard over the intercom; although Victor didn't like him, he felt bad.

Finally Reus led them through an inconspicuous door and they entered a small laboratory. A big work table was in the middle of the room, piled with different apparatuses, papers, spilled liquids and a lot of broken glass.

Examining the room, Victor spotted the portal gun, lying on a shelf at the other side of the room.

Quickly he went to recover it, noticing a scientist lying on the floor in a puddle of blood, his skull smashed by a part of the ceiling. Victor felt the urge to vomit, but he controlled himself, took the portal gun with him and went back to Reus who waited patiently at the door.

Reus nodded at him and then they proceeded to make their way to the emergency exit. As they were nearly there they could already see some people in front of the airlock, including Johnson.

"Thank god you guys made it."

He jogged to them and handed them some weapons. Victor attached a HK MP7 to his belt and put his portal gun on his back, using another belt; Reus got a shotgun. Victor stared at him for a while, perplexed.

"Oh, yes, I know it's strange but, uhm, I proved to be best with this kind of weapon, andâ€|"

"Come on guys, we need to get out of here. The elevator is very slow - it needs nearly three minutes to go up; we want to take one ride altogether." Johnson gestured towards the other people behind him, about fifteen men and women. Victor noticed Weikner being there, too.

They already wanted to join the others, as machine gun fire went off somewhere. Everyone froze at once; just the alarm sirens could be heard anymore. Johnson dragged Reus and Victor with him and took cover in a doorway, which was leading to an office complex.

Suddenly a heavy, spider-like robot on four legs entered the corridor through another door. Its small, spherical greenish metal body hung

below the joints of the long legs; a Gatling-gun was installed at the bottom side and a red glowing orb attached to the front.

The next few things seemed to happen in slow motion. The strange robot aimed at the people in front of the emergency exit, who were trying to run away from it; the gun already began to rotate and then to shoot. The people were cut down, most halved in the middle, crying and trying to run away from the merciless machine; no one survived.

After the gun went silent the whole corridor looked horrifying; the bullet-ridden walls and the floor were covered with blood and guts, the remains of the innocent people lying everywhere. Some peoples' torsos still moved or moaned, their faces being masks of horror and pain.

Victor spotted Weikner lying somewhere near his position. He didn't really know her but she didn't deserve this. Not one of those people deserved this.

He felt his eyes water and an unpleasant coldness ripped through his heart. Dropping his knees to the floor he vomited in a corner of the office complex they hid in now, feeling strangely weak after he finally emptied his stomach. Johnson, his face as white as snow, had closed the door and leaned against it while Reus wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, eyes wide, looking just as horrified as Johnson.

"Oh my god!" Johnson stared blankly at the opposite wall. "It fucking killed them all, it killed them, it fucking killed them, it!" his voice became shriller and shriller, more and more desperate.

Suddenly he flew away together with the door which has been kicked in by the spider-robot. Johnson moaned underneath the door, then lifted it to the side and stood up on unsteady feet.

"Get the fuck away from there!" Victor shouted, but Johnson was too confused to react; thus Victor decided to throw himself at Johnson, both flying behind a thick wall that divided the one half of the room from the other. Just in time, because hundreds of bullets already impacted on the desks behind their previous position, sending wood splinters everywhere.

Reus hid meanwhile under a desk, hoping that the enemy wouldn't see him, all the time trying to think of some way to defeat the machine.

Having recovered from his drowsiness Johnson looked frantically around. Both he and Victor could already hear the robot closing in on them.

"We're so fucked. Our weapons probably won't even scrape its metal hull and we can't run because then it has a clear line of fire!" shit, shit, shit, think of something Johnson, fucking think of something!"

Victor suddenly remembered the machine had a glowing red orb attached to its front.

'_Probably a camera.'_

He breathed out slowly, collecting his senses and forcing the fear and horror in a distant corner of his mind. Realizing it was their one and only chance, he came out of cover, holding the MP7 in his hands and took aim at the 'eye' of the robot. He could already see the Gatling begin to rotate and he felt cold sweat flowing down his forehead, but he didn't flinch. Then he opened fire, causing his muscles to go tense to counter the kickback of the weapon. The orb exploded in thousand pieces of red broken glass, leaving the robot without any orientation.

Nevertheless Victor already thought he'd die, cut down by the Gatling, not able to take cover in time.

Just then something unpredictable happened " suddenly the robot exploded in a big fireball, throwing Victor against the opposite wall. He lay at the floor, eyes closed, but still conscious. His submachine gun was still in his right hand and he wasn't hurt seriously, but he felt too fatigued to stand up.

But the sound of someone approaching him made him open his eyes and quickly get up; he froze as he saw the stranger standing in front of him: A tall and thin young woman, in a black body suit. A gas mask hung below her face and long, red hair fell over her shoulders; she was beautiful, Victor noted.

She tilted her head to one side and spoke up.

"I don't know whether this was brave or just plain stupid, but you shoot quite well."

Victor stared at her, confused, noticing that Johnson and Reus approached them. Johnson held his right side but no blood could be seen besides some cuts all over his body; Victor doubted he looked much better.

"Who are you? You couldn't have warned me before blowing up this thing right in front of my face?"

"Well, no problem, I suppose, I didn't just save your lives or something"

"Alright, alright, thanks I guess. But anyways what are you doing here? You don't look like security personnel."

She shook her head and left the room.

"Later. Let's get out of here first."

The three men followed her quickly, trying neither to step into the bloody mess on the corridor nor to look at it; Reus vomited once more, but nothing came out of his empty stomach.

They all stepped into the air lock; lockers covered the walls, filled with environmental suits and gas masks. Reus closed the inner hatch.

"Alright, dress into one of those and take a gas mask with you plus some replacement filters; each one should hold for about twelve

hours, so take as many as you can with you. We do not know how long we'll be out there."

The environmental suits were made out of some gray material which covered most of their bodies; Johnson mentioned they were acid-resistant and bulletproof and also had a Geiger-counter and an automatic medical system.

They quickly put the suits and the gas masks on; Victor took about twenty of the filters with him, placing them in his pockets. After they were ready the woman just put her gas mask over her mouth and then opened the outer hatch. With a quiet hiss it opened and they walked out into a big square hall which was about thirty meters high; they could see the sky above them. A metal construction in the middle of the hall allowed an elevator to climb to the surface.

"Come on, let's get inside this thing." The woman's voice could be heard over the radio.

They made their way to the surface, waiting for the elevator to finally reach its destination. Explosions shook them from time to time and always Reus would wince.

Victor noticed both Johnson and Reus seemed to be shaken to the core. He didn't know most of the people down there, but he felt horrible about what happened, too. They on the other hand knew most of the personnel, some just briefly, but down there were also friends, the ones they cared about and people they've known for a long time; and they were the only survivors.

'_Just the same thing happened two days ago to Aperture Scienceâ€¦ I absolutely forgot about that. I'm such a stupid jerk.'_

He shook his head, a sad expression on his face.

The elevator halted and the doors opened. The little group began to walk towards the border of a nearby forest, about 500 meters away. Shortly after arriving at a group of stones, a great explosion shook the ground. Looking back, Victor noticed smoke coming out of the hole where they came out. There were some cracks in the ground above the former scientific facility.

Reus just collapsed on one of the stones and his sobs could be heard through the radio. Johnson joined him and tried to comfort him, but he didn't look much better than his friend.

The woman gestured to Victor to change the frequency of the radio to another channel; she led him a little bit further into the forest, all the time cautiously avoiding the trees.

Then she just stopped and turned around.

"Alright, I wanted to let those two alone to process these events. But we have to talk. You already asked who I am. My name is Karen, I came here toâ€¦"

"Wait a moment, what are you even doing here? Are there even more humans on this planet? Has been half the humanity transported here?"

"I was getting to that. No, we were the only ones besides you."

She sat down on a rock after clearing it from all moss, Victor doing the same to another rock opposite to her.

"It was about one year ago, I lived with my aunt in a small village in Scotland. Thankfully the Combine didn't come anywhere near us. The village being quite isolated didn't attract much attention."

"Who's the Combine?"

She looked at him, surprised.

"You don't know who the Combine is? How long are you already here?"

"I've been here for two days, the others for half a year. I don't have a clue who or what this Combine is."

"That's impossible. The Combine invaded earth twenty years ago, during the Seven Hour War."

"Earth seemed to be still alien-free two days ago"

Suddenly her eyes widened.

"If that's the case we were not only moved in space but also in time."

He stared at her, shocked to his core.

"Then? More than twenty years passed since I left earth? Oh, god"

She looked at him sympathetically, but then proceeded to speak.

"However? Some scientists at a Black Mesa facility opened a portal to another world, called the Xen. This event is called the 'Resonance Cascade' - the name has something to do with the scientific details.

The Combine, an Imperium of many enslaved races, spanning over multiple parallel universes, used this opportunity to conquer earth. This was the Seven Hour War. They defeated us quite easily. After this they recruited and modified a lot of humans for their armies. Most of the other people were rounded up in big cities, which had just numbers as names - _City 17_ for example. There they built their Citadels - huge towers, used as command centers and factories. They also installed suppression fields - they prevent any human procreation.

However, our village was left untouched.

Until about a year ago. Suddenly we were just somewhere else. We stood in the middle of some city underneath a huge glass dome. The first thing _I_ noticed was the huge silhouette of a citadel sticking out from the mass of the strange buildings. After that the Combine, which had conquered this planet, too, imprisoned us. Many of us died during confinement, including my aunt. I still don't understand

why they didn't kill us at once.

However, nearly two months later we were all near death and we had nearly no hope to escape anymore, when the city was suddenly attacked. Rebels crushed the forces of the Combine " I think they had many casualties, but they defeated the Combine. We just fled, using some gas masks that lay in a storage room so we could escape from the glass dome.

A few kilometers south of the city, at the beach of an ocean we found a deserted underground complex, where we decided to settle in.

Well, and not long ago, some scouts found out there were another group of humans nearby" so I was sent to make contact with you but" something unexpected happened."

Victor nodded slowly.

"Was that the Combine that attacked us?"

"No" she shook her head "I never saw such machines before."

He stood up and made his way back to his mourning friends.

"Then take us to that settlement of yours. I want to know what the fuck's happening here."

Authors Note:

Somehow, I'm really motivated to write" so many updates in such short time. Well, tell me (please") what do you think? I have big plans with this story " most of the plot is already planned. I also changed the rating to M, I think it's quite obvious why"

In the future I think I'll publish a longer Fallout story, too, and an original story on FictionPress.

End
file.